

24-Hour Crisis Intervention and Mental Health Referral Services

Advocates, Inc., Psychiatric Emergency Services

1-508-872-3333
Serving Dover

Boston Emergency Screening Team

1-800-981-HELP
Serving Brookline

Brockton Multi-Service Center

1-508-897-2101
Serving Avon, Holbrook, Stoughton

Riverside Community Care

1-800-529-5077
Serving Canton, Dedham, Foxborough, Medfield, Millis, Needham, Norfolk, Norwood, Plainville, Sharon, Walpole, Wellesley, Weston, Westwood, Wrentham

Riverside Community Care Blackstone Valley Emergency Services Team

1-800-294-4665
Serving Bellingham, Franklin

South Shore Mental Health Center

1-800-528-4890
Serving Braintree, Cohasset, Milton, Quincy, Randolph, Weymouth

The Samaritans

Business Line: 617-536-2460

24-Hour Hotlines:
617-247-0220 / 508-875-4500

The Samaritans:
1-877-SOS-TEEN / 1-800-252-8336

*This brochure has been produced by the
Norfolk Anti-Crime Council.*



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Adolescent Growing Pains or Something More Serious?



In Massachusetts, suicide is the second leading cause of death among teenagers. There are an estimated 24,000 suicide attempts by high school students each year.

Adults have an important role in the prevention of youth suicide. Knowing what to look for and how to respond can make the difference between life and death.

Risk Factors

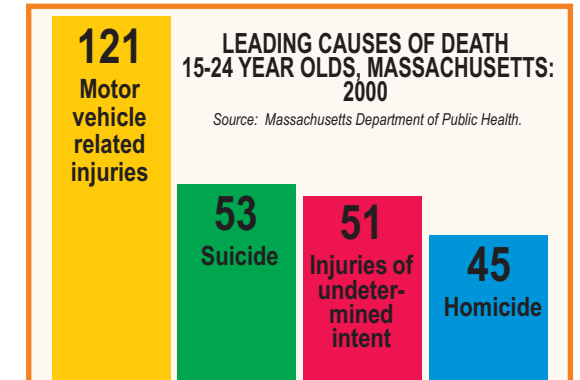
- Major mental health problems
- Trauma, including rape and domestic violence
- Substance abuse problems
- Loss of a family member or friend (especially if by suicide)
- Gender identity issues
- Poor family stability

Depression

Most suicidal youth suffer some degree of depression.

It is important to distinguish **depression** from a temporary **"case of the blues"**. The "blues" usually affects teenagers only briefly and may disappear after talking to someone who cares.

Depression, on the other hand, is a medical illness. It influences one's thinking, feeling and normal body functions such as eating and sleeping. Depression may persist without treatment.



Warning Signs and Clues

Beware if the following signs persist:

- Sad or "empty" feelings
- Unexplained exhaustion or agitation
- Guilty feelings
- Withdrawal from activities that were once pleasurable
- Difficulty concentrating
- Change in eating and sleeping habits
- Decline in school performance or refusal to go to school
- Drug and alcohol use
- Violent actions; rebellious behavior; running away
- Unexplained aches and pains

Don't ignore the warning signs — it's a matter of life or death

Once the idea of suicide is considered, the attempt doesn't usually happen right away. There is usually a two to three week period where the person says and does things that indicate their intention to commit suicide. It is not easy to determine if the youth is suicidal. Often the behavior is conflicting and changing.

Ways the Youth Might Act

- Overly pessimistic
- Uncharacteristically bright spirited "everything is OK...I've got it under control"
- Overly self critical
- Complaints of being a "bad person" or feeling "rotten inside"
- Preoccupied with death (through music, poetry, drawings)
- Talks about suicide
- Neglect of personal appearance
- Increases use of alcohol or drugs
- Isolates self from friends and family
- Puts life in order: makes a will, gives away favorite possessions



Things the Youth Might Say

- I wish I were dead
- I won't be a problem for you much longer
- Nothing matters
- It's no use
- I won't see you again
- I believe in suicide
- You will be better off without me
- I'm so tired of it all
- What's the point of living
- I won't need this anymore
- We all have to say goodbye
- How do I become an organ donor
- Who cares if I am dead, anyway



What You Can Do to Help

- ❖ **Most Important:** Do not ignore warning signs. You should make the first move for help because a suicidal child probably won't.
- ❖ **Talk to the teen privately.**
- ❖ **Talk to the teen's parents or family members as soon as possible.**
- ❖ **Seek professional help (school officials; mental health professionals — see list on back cover).**

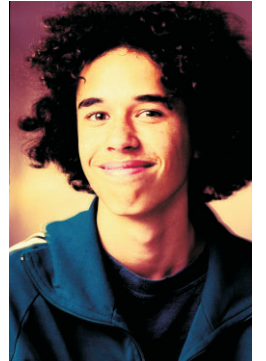
When talking to the teen:

- Explain why you are concerned and make sure they know you care.
- Ask if they have had suicidal thoughts or have attempted suicide in the past. **It's okay...asking the question actually decreases the risk of suicide.** The youth will probably be relieved that someone has noticed and is talking to them about it.
- Stay calm and listen. Allowing them to talk it out may help "lift the problem off their shoulders."
- Remind the youth that suicide is a permanent solution to a *temporary problem*.
- Formulate a plan together. Identify individuals who can help. Offer to stay and accompany him or her to a meeting with parents or professionals.
- **Do not** act shocked or angry.
- **Do not** promise to keep a secret. If the youth is suicidal, professionals must be notified.
- **Do not** leave the youth alone if you sense immediate danger of suicide.



When talking to the teen's parent(s):

- Share your concerns about their child.
- Discuss examples of what their child has said or done.
- Review the warning signs of depression and suicide. Give them a copy of this brochure.
- Recommend their child talk to a mental health professional (suggest they contact their insurance carrier, their doctor or school psychologist for referrals).
- Make them aware that their child should not be left alone or have access to firearms, a car or medicines (prescription or non-prescription).
- **Remind parents that depression is a medical disease that may persist and worsen without treatment.**



Prompt, clear, accurate and supportive communication with the family members can make the difference between life and death.

Information in this brochure was obtained from the National Institute of Mental Health, the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, and the Massachusetts Department of Education.

For TTY/TDD users call Massachusetts Relay Service TTY/TDD: 1-800-439-2370 / Voice: 1-800-439-0183